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U.S. Viet Nam Policy Chief Is Ousted; Blamed for Flops

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By MICHAEL O'NEILL

Washington, Feb. 25 (NEWS Bureau)—Assistant Secretary of State Roger Hilsman has resigned under pressure in a major Administration blowup over his handling of the war effort in South Viet Nam. THE NEWS learned tonight.

Informed sources said the West Point graduate and guerrilla war expert was finally cut down by officials in the White House, Pentagon and State Department. They had become increasingly critical of his performance as the top policy coordinator.

An undercover campaign against Hilsman had been under way for some months because of personality clashes and misgivings about the sharpness of his thinking. But the showdown didn't come until this month, when the war effort took a turn for the worse and top Administration officials decided a quick and dramatic change was needed.

.. He'll Go Back to Teaching ..

Hilsman was first stripped of his responsibilities for Viet Nam, then encouraged to quit. Although he was given to understand he could get another top government post, he said he would return to the academic world. He previously taught at Princeton and Johns Hopkins Universities.

A new man is being groomed to take over Hilsman's thankless job as assistant secretary for Far Eastern affairs. Announcement of the shift is expected to be delayed until details of his replacement are ironed out.

The State Department has already announced creation of a new super Viet Nam policy committee, serving directly under Secretary of State Dean Rusk. It will coordinate the thinking of State, Defense, the CIA and the White House.

Officials familiar with the so-called "Hilsman problem" said the central difficulty was that he tended to fire off new policies without working them out carefully in advance with other officials. This caused endless friction and bickering.

Hilsman, 44, veteran of Merrill's Marauders and anti-Japanese guerrilla fighting, was named assistant secretary last March 13 after serving as the State Department's intelligence chief.

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